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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
70th session

Consolidated guidelines for State reports under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*

A. Introduction

A.1 These guidelines replace all earlier versions issued by the Human Rights Committee, which may now be disregarded (CCPR/C/19/Rev.1 of 26 August 1982, CCPR/C/5/Rev.2 of 28 April 1995 and Annex VIII to the Committee's 1998 report to the General Assembly (A/53/40)); the Committee's general comment 2 (13) of 1981 is also superseded. The present guidelines do not affect the Committee's procedure in relation to any special reports which may be requested.

A.2 These guidelines will be effective for all reports to be presented after 31 December 1999.

A.3 The guidelines should be followed by States parties in the preparation of initial and all subsequent periodic reports.

A.4 Compliance with these guidelines will reduce the need for the Committee to request further information when it proceeds to consider a report; it will also help the Committee to consider the situation regarding human rights in every State party on an equal basis.

* Adopted during the 66th session (July 1999) of the Human Rights Committee and amended during its 70th session (October 2000)

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B. Framework of the Covenant concerning reports

B.1 Every State party, upon ratifying the Covenant, undertakes, under article 40, to submit, within a year of the Covenant's entry into force for that State, an initial report on the measures it has adopted which give effect to the rights recognized in the Covenant ("Covenant rights") and progress made in their enjoyment; and thereafter periodic reports whenever the Committee so requests.

B.2 For subsequent periodic reports the Committee has adopted a practice of stating, at the end of its concluding observations, a date by which the following periodic report should be submitted.

C. General guidance for contents of all reports

C.1 The articles and the Committee's general comments. The terms of the articles in Parts I, II and III of the Covenant must, together with general comments issued by the Committee on any such article, be taken into account in preparing the report.

C.2 Reservations and declarations. Any reservation to or declaration as to any article of the Covenant by the State party should be explained and its continued maintenance justified.

C.3 Derogations. The date, extent and effect of, and procedures for imposing and for lifting any derogation under article 4 should be fully explained in relation to every article of the Covenant affected by the derogation.

C.4 Factors and difficulties. Article 40 of the Covenant requires that factors and difficulties, if any, affecting the implementation of the Covenant should be indicated. A report should explain the nature and extent of, and reasons for every such factor and difficulty, if any such exist; and should give details of the steps being taken to overcome these.

C.5 Restrictions or limitations. Certain articles of the Covenant permit some defined restrictions or limitations on rights. Where these exist their nature and extent should be set out.

C.6 Data and statistics. A report should include sufficient data and statistics to enable the Committee to assess progress in the enjoyment of Covenant rights, relevant to any appropriate article.

C.7 Article 3. The situation regarding the equal enjoyment of Covenant rights by men and women should be specifically addressed.

C.8 Core document. Where the State party has already prepared a core document (see HRI/CORR/1, dated 24 February 1992), this will be available to the Committee: it should be updated as necessary in the report, particularly as regards "General legal framework" and "Information and publicity" (see HRI/CORR/1, paras. 3 and 4).

D. The initial report

D.1 General

This report is the State party's first opportunity to present to the Committee the extent to which its laws and practices comply with the Covenant which it has ratified. The report should:

- Establish the constitutional and legal framework for the implementation of Covenant rights;

- Explain the legal and practical measures adopted to give effect to Covenant rights;

- Demonstrate the progress made in ensuring enjoyment of Covenant rights by the people within the State party and subject to its jurisdiction.

D.2 Contents of the report

D.2.1 A State party should deal specifically with every article in Parts I, II and III of the Covenant; legal norms should be described, but that is not sufficient: the factual situation and the practical availability, effect and implementation of remedies for violation of Covenant rights should be explained and exemplified.

D.2.2 The report should explain:

How article 2 of the Covenant is applied, setting out the principal legal measures which the State party has taken to give effect to Covenant rights; and the range of remedies available to persons whose rights may have been violated;

Whether the Covenant is incorporated into domestic law in such a manner as to be directly applicable;

If not, whether its provisions can be invoked before and given effect to by courts, tribunals and administrative authorities;

Whether the Covenant rights are guaranteed in a Constitution or other laws and to what extent; or

Whether Covenant rights must be enacted or reflected in domestic law by legislation so as to be enforceable.

D.2.3 Information should be given about the judicial, administrative and other competent authorities having jurisdiction to secure Covenant rights.

D.2.4 The report should include information about any national or official institution or machinery which exercises responsibility in implementing Covenant rights or in responding to complaints of violations of such rights, and give examples of their activities in this respect.

D.3 Annexes to the report

D.3.1 The report should be accompanied by copies of the relevant principal constitutional, legislative and other texts which guarantee and provide remedies in relation to Covenant rights. Such texts will not be copied or translated, but will be available to members of the Committee; it is important that the report itself contains sufficient quotations from or summaries of these texts so as to ensure that the report is clear and comprehensible without reference to the annexes.

E. Subsequent periodic reports

E.1 There should be two starting points for such reports:

The concluding observations (particularly "Concerns" and "Recommendations") on the previous report and summary records of the Committee's consideration (insofar as these exist);

An examination by the State party of the progress made towards and the current situation concerning the enjoyment of Covenant rights by persons within its territory or jurisdiction.

E.2 Periodic reports should be structured so as to follow the articles of the Covenant. If there is nothing new to report under any article it should be so stated.1/

E.3 The State party should refer again to the guidance on initial reports and on annexes, insofar as these may also apply to a periodic report.

E.4 There may be circumstances where the following matters should be addressed, so as to elaborate a periodic report:

There may have occurred a fundamental change in the State party's political and legal approach affecting Covenant rights: in such a case a full article by article report may be required;

New legal or administrative measures may have been introduced which deserve the annexure of texts and judicial or other decisions.

F. Optional protocols

F.1 If the State party has ratified the Optional Protocol and the Committee has issued Views entailing provision of a remedy or expressing any other concern, relating to a communication received under that Protocol, a report should (unless the matter has been dealt with in a previous report) include information about the steps taken to provide a remedy, or meet such a concern, and to ensure that any circumstance thus criticized does not recur.

F.2 If the State party has abolished the death penalty the situation relating to the Second Optional Protocol should be explained.G. The Committee's consideration of reports

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1/ E.2 in fine: adopted at the 70th session

G.1 General

The Committee intends its consideration of a report to take the form of a constructive discussion with the delegation, the aim of which is to improve the situation pertaining to Covenant rights in the State.

G.2 List of issues

On the basis of all information at its disposal, the Committee will supply in advance a list of issues which will form the basic agenda for consideration of the report. The delegation should come prepared to address the list of issues and to respond to further questions from members, with such updated information as may be necessary; and to do so within the time allocated for consideration of the report.

G.3 The State party's delegation

The Committee wishes to ensure that it is able effectively to perform its functions under article 40 and that the reporting State party should obtain the maximum benefit from the reporting requirement. The State party's delegation should, therefore, include persons who, through their knowledge of and competence to explain the human rights situation in that State, are able to respond to the Committee's written and oral questions and comments concerning the whole range of Covenant rights.

G.4 Concluding observations

Shortly after the consideration of the report, the Committee will publish its concluding observations on the report and the ensuing discussion with the delegation. These concluding observations will be included in the Committee's annual report to the General Assembly; the Committee expects the State party to disseminate these conclusions, in all appropriate languages, with a view to public information and discussion.

G.5 Extra information

G.5.1 Following the submission of any report, subsequent revisions or updating may only be submitted:

(a) No later than 10 weeks prior to the date set for the Committee's consideration of the report (the minimum time required by the United Nations translation services); or,

(b) after that date, provided that the text has been translated by the State party into the working languages of the Committee (currently English, Spanish and French).

If one or other of these courses is not complied with, the Committee will not be able to take an addendum into account. This, however, does not apply to updated annexes or statistics.

G.5.2 In the course of the consideration of a report, the Committee may request or the delegation may offer further information; the secretariat will keep a note of such matters which should be dealt with in the next report.

G.6.1 The Committee may, in a case where there has been a long-term failure by a State party, despite reminders, to submit an initial or a periodic report, announce its intention to examine the extent of compliance with Covenant rights in that State party at a specified future session. Prior to that session it will transmit to the State party appropriate material in its possession. The State party may send a delegation to the specified session, which may contribute to the Committee's discussion, but in any event the Committee may issue provisional concluding observations and set a date for the submission by the State party of a report of a nature to be specified.

G.6.2 In a case where a State party, having submitted a report which has been scheduled at a session for examination, informs the Committee, at a time when it is impossible to schedule the examination of another State party report, that its delegation will not attend the session, the Committee may examine the report on the basis of the list of issues either at that session or at another to be specified. In the absence of a Delegation, it may decide either to reach provisional concluding observations, or to consider the report and other material and follow the course in para. G4 above. 2/

H. Format of the report

The distribution of a report, and thus its availability for consideration by the Committee, will be greatly facilitated if:

(a) The paragraphs are sequentially numbered;

(b) The document is written on A4-sized paper;

(c) Is single-spaced, and

(d) Allows reproduction by photo-offset (is on one side only of each sheet of paper).

2/ G.6.1 and 2: adopted during the 70th session